DOCUMENTARY

film news

INCORPORATING DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

AUGUST 1948 ONE SHILLING

Third time in Britain

First time in Documentary

DATA

is now producing a four-reel picture planned for DEEP FOCUS technique throughout

We won't say any more till we know for certain how good we are at it, but we are never afraid to experiment

DOCUMENTARY TECHNICIANS ALLIANCE LTD. 21 SOHO SQUARE W1. GERRARD 2826

VISUAL AIDS IN SCIENTIFIC & AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

I.C.I. has prepared the following lists of its productions. Copies will be sent to educational authorities who apply on their official notepaper.

I.C.I. MEDICAL FILMS

I.C.I. AGRICULTURAL & VETERINARY FILMS

I.C.I. FILMS FOR SCHOOLS

I.C.I. AGRICULTURAL FILM STRIPS

Write to the I.C.I. FILM LIBRARY, Imperial Chemical Industries Limited, Nobel House, London, S.W.1

ICI

★ *Films available in 16 mm. sound on free loan to approved borrowers.*

K.1

British Cartoons

chosen for the Film Festivals

1946 Cannes

'Handling Ships' (Adm)

1946 Prague

'Old Wives' Tales' (MOI)

1947 Brussels

'Modern Guide to Health' (COI)

1947 Edinburgh

'Modern Guide to Health' (COI)

1948 Paris (the first all-cartoon Festival)

'What's Cooking?' (SHB)

'Fable of the Fabrics' (JWT)

'Your Very Good Health' (COI)

'Charley's March of Time' (COI)

1948 Venice

'New Town' (COI)

1948 Edinburgh

'New Town' (COI)

'Your Very Good Health' (COI)

All produced by:—

HALAS & BATCHELOR LTD
10a SOHO SQUARE
LONDON W1

DOCUMENTARY film news

VOL. 7 NO. 68 AUGUST 1948

EDITORIAL BOARD

STEPHEN ACKROYD — KEN CAMERON
DONALD ALEXANDER — PAUL FLETCHER
MAX ANDERSON — SINCLAIR ROAD
EDGAR ANSTEY — GRAHAME THARP
GEOFFREY BELL — BASIL WRIGHT

EDITOR
DAVIDE BOULTING

ASSISTANT EDITOR
JANE DAVIES

CONTENTS

Edinburgh—The First Week
Stephen Ackroyd 85, 86

Edinburgh 1948
John Grierson 87

World Union of Documentary
D. Alexander and B. Wright 88, 89

Edinburgh Illustrated 90, 91

Pas de Deux
Peter Baylis and Jack Howells 92

Why Should Truth go Dowdy? 93

The Red Shoes 94

South African Film Societies
Lily Rabkin 95

Correspondence 96

Published every month by

Film Centre 34 Soho Sq. London W1

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 12s. SINGLE COPIES 1s.

REPORT FROM EDINBURGH

The First Week

by Stephen Ackroyd

AS I stood in Princes Street last Saturday, the evening before the second International Festival of Music and Drama was due to begin, and looked up at the castle, which dominates the city of Edinburgh—the castle whose grim outlines would soon be dissolved by the magic of floodlight—I confess that I had a moment of doubt. Could Edinburgh in 1948 repeat the success of 1947? The answer came soon enough. Packed houses, enthusiastic audiences, and that fantastic, carefree, carnival atmosphere, which alone of our cities Edinburgh could have conjured up, these are all here again —and this time to stay; for it is now unthinkable that this great International Festival should not have a permanent place in the cultural events of our island.

That the Documentary Film is a part of this festival should be a matter of great pride to all who are concerned in its future, and all documentary workers owe a deep debt of gratitude to the City of Edinburgh and to the Edinburgh Film Guild to whom is due the credit for the whole conception of the documentary festival, and who have done such a magnificent job in organizing it.

For the significance of the Edinburgh Documentary Festival does not lie only in the fact that here we are able to study, to exchange experiences, and to learn from the work of fellow documentary film-makers from many countries; it is also in the fact that here, beside the arts of Music and Drama, Documentary stands as a medium on its own. Here, seen by an international audience, is the work of men and women from all over the world who strive, like ourselves, to express in film the factual realities of our time. It is in this realization of the truly international character of the Documentary idea that the real significance of the Edinburgh Film Festival lies, and which makes this event one of the most exciting and stimulating of experiences.

A detailed survey of the films shown at the Festival will be published in our next issue—today at the end of the first week it is only possible to touch on a few of the high-lights so far.

Opened by Sir Michael Balcon, who had some pertinent remarks to make about the new Film Finance Corporation, the Festival began last Sunday with a world première in the Caley Cinema of Robert Flaherty's fine new film, *The Louisiana Story*. I wish that those distributors and exhibitors who have such a low opinion of the tastes of the British public could have been there to watch this huge audience, made up for the most part of the ordinary men and women of Edinburgh, held spellbound by the beauty and the poetry

of Flaherty's handling of this story of a small French-Canadian boy, simple and superstitious, brought up among the wilds of the Louisiana swamp-land, who is suddenly thrown into contact with the mechanized monsters of our oil-seeking civilization. This is a film to see and to flavour again. Preceding this were three short films, *A Divided World*—a new film from Sweden by Sucksdorff, about which no more need be said than that it is a worthy successor to *The Shadows Over Snow*, which created such a sensation last year; *The Vain Bear*—a delightful colour cartoon from Russia; and *Dramma di Christo*—a film about the paintings of Giotto, which demonstrated again the mastery and skill of present-day Italian documentary film-makers.

On Monday began the twice-daily performances in the Guild Theatre; to select is invidious, but, leaving aside Britain, which is well represented, from among foreign films mention may be made of *Men of the Mists*, the first Bulgarian film to be seen in this country; of a remarkable experiment in the use of film for critical assessment, *The World of Paul Delvaux* by Henri Storck from Belgium; *Les Santons*, a ballet film from France contrasting with our own *Steps of the Ballet*; of *Ditte Child of Man*, Henning-Jensen's moving story of the tragedy of illegitimacy; *The Loon's Necklace* from Canada—an Indian legend, brilliantly reconstructed with native masks; *Goemons* from France—a fine if depressing study of life on a barren island where seaweed is gathered; of *La Rose et le Reseda*, a setting of an Aragon poem from France; *Zoo di Petra*, another Italian film dealing this time with sculpture; *The Dragon of Cracow*, a delightful puppet film from Poland; *Sacrifice*, a grim but fine study of primitive blood rites from Sweden; *Chinese Shadow Play*—a delightful study of one of the oldest forms of entertainment in the world. To these could be added the first examples of documentary films to be seen here from Austria, Spain, Eire and many others, together with the first Yugoslav feature *Slavitza*. Tomorrow sees the first showing of a new film about Edinburgh itself, *The Waverley Steps*, in an all Scottish programme at the Caley Cinema, and in the evening the première in this country of Roberto Rossellini's new film, *Germany Year Zero*. Next week the programme resumes at Guild House until Wednesday, and will be repeated from September 2 to 11. Besides which there are additional films on Sundays, special educational film shows and a separate showing of children's films. Apart from the films there are bi-weekly lectures by well-known speakers on various aspects of the documentary film, and an exhibition of stills showing the development of the documentary technique.

Last year the Documentary Festival was a small, though important, 'side-show' to the main Festival. This year it is an integral part, in its own right, of this unique and moving event.

I cannot leave the subject of Edinburgh without a word on the broader picture. Whether or not one's main interest is films, no one can afford to miss a visit to this great and beautiful city during these three weks. At a time when the world is again closing around us, hag-ridden with fear, we can refresh our spirits and find a new hope for the future in this international feast of beauty which is spread in bewildering profusion before us.

In no other city and at no other time in this island can one find, from so many countries, cheek by jowl, opera, ballet, drama, films, art exhibitions and music, music of the people and of the world's greatest artists, and above all perhaps such a cosmopolitan mixture of men and women laughing, experiencing, and enjoying these things—and this in a setting which matches worthily the event. These things, the music, the films, the drama can, it is true, be seen or heard singly in other places, but here, together, they add up to something which transcends them all.

As I write, trumpeters in scarlet and gold are coming out of the Assembly Hall to stand on the Mount and blow their call out over the city to the people in Edinburgh—and beyond them to the people of the world—to gather to hear Tyrone Guthrie's magnificent production of Sir David Lindsay's 16th century morality play, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaits*. Lindsay would have been proud of Edinburgh today.

Edinburgh, August 26

THE ARNOT ROBERTSON FUND

ON Tuesday, July 27, the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Ltd. from an award of £1,500 damages made to Miss E. Arnot Robertson when she sued the company for libel and slander following a letter sent by MGM to the BBC Director of Talks suggesting that she was out of touch with the tastes and entertainment requirements of the picture-going public and that 'her criticisms are, on the whole, unnecessarily harmful to the film industry'. (The hearing of this original case began in the King's Bench Division before Mr Justice Hilbery and a Special Jury on July 16, 1947.)

Immediately the result of the Appeal became known, the Film Section of the Critics' Circle announced through its Hon. Secretary, Milton Deane, that it would launch forthwith a Fund to assist Miss Arnot Robertson with the costs of her action, estimated at £5,000. A Fighting Fund would also be established to enable Miss Robertson to take her case to the Lords. In his statement to the Press Mr Deane said: 'We feel that a case of this sort where the original judgment, with a jury, is overturned on strictly legal points, the whole future of free and responsible criticism is in jeopardy. This new judgment might well give encouragement to all those purely commercial interests in the Cinema which would like to see Press criticism muzzled and intimidated. In the end it is the public, whom the critics serve, who will suffer.'

As soon as the establishment of the Fund was announced, contributions in large and small amounts started coming in from all over the country, and one well-wisher undertook to double any subscription received up to £1,000.

Contributions should be made payable to Mr. Milton Deane, and sent to him at 1 Garrick Mansions, Charing Cross Road, WC2.

Edinburgh 1948

by

John Grierson

THE EDINBURGH show this month is going to be a big show and an important one, and we will go into that later. To keep the decencies and the proportions, I should begin by saying that the Edinburgh show was always a big show anyway.

This year as last it is a Festival with pictures from everywhere and of all kinds, stretching all across and inside the denotation and connotation of the documentary thing. Twenty-seven countries are showing, they say, and the best is present. Bob Flaherty is there with his new one, *Louisiana Story*, and yet another brilliant evocation of the damn fool sense of innocence this wonderful old character pursues: his eye keener than ever, sensibility ever softer and so on, and Frances still around. Rossellini is there with his *Berlin Zero* and a turning camera on cat-feet which should interest the longshot-midshot-close-up boys in their technical vitals. Canada, bless the Chinook wind which thaws its winters, presents itself in the rough and tough European time with perhaps the best of all reportage items on European itself. It had no reason, except in its native and national generosity, to make it at all. France is there with the brilliant edition by Nicole Vedrès of the Edwardian years of Fallière: not so much nostalgic as witty and civilized. Norway is there with its big Nordic tale of Norwegian wartime bravery in the *Battle of Heavy Waier*.

Documentary looks quite a thing in the Edinburgh programme, as though it really was an idea that had started something, in reportage and interpretation, inside countries and across boundaries, for the illumination of much.

But—and I have been holding the but on a now longish string—Edinburgh isn't an accident in all this. It might have been Geneva and wasn't, or New York and wasn't, or Paris and wasn't. It might have been Warsaw and wasn't; and that is an item all by itself of which more will be heard.

The point is that Edinburgh has served the documentary idea from its inception with more continuity, more common sense, more constructive effort in film societies, film clubs, cinema quarterlies and whatnot, and more of the stuff that it takes when it comes to the critical punches than any other city. If there is a centre today which deserves more than any other to be regarded as the city where our wares can all-properly be shown and our accounts kept, it is surely this place in tne north, with its rock behind it and its fuddy-duddy old sense that there might be sin itself in pursuing the shadow instead of the substance.

For all this we are indebted to a few unique characters who really believed it all from the first, and simply, and by sheer strength of their own sense of service, became the conscience of an idea which could all too easily have slipped without them.

Just to mark out the group and put it on this all too inadequate record, let us note down the central names of Norman Wilson, Forsyth Hardy and Charlie Oakley. Now that it is all a big, big show and everyone takes it for granted, let us note also that even in this latest stage of international coming together and being constructive and real about international coming together, documentary is still their local theirs.

It has been hard work for them over the years. They were not film men and had no reason, except in their faith in others, to give their time, energy and organizing capacity to the service of those of us who drew the dough and took the bows. I hope, in this year's Festival, they have the feeling that they have matured a personal work of great and unselfish order, worth a dozen and one sentimental and uncreative excursions into international necking.

For British documentary itself the occasion is especially important. It is easy to knock British documentary around at this moment and say that it looked a poor stick and a sad squirt at Brussels last year and that Roberto on the other hand is wonderful, which he certainly is. But it should be equally easy to remember, if the will is there and if the smartypants and the people we will always henceforth remember as our 'warm admirers' can think in proportion, that British documentary is still much the biggest operation in the whole international set-up.

In its very size it has its special problems which should at this stage be respected and worked on: of organization, of finding pattern within an extending field, of keeping its eye on an ever more difficult but more real aesthetic ball, of renewing and refreshing its political sense in the light of new circumstances, of maintaining its original fervour in the discovery of new talents and in the provision of experimental opportunity for them.

All this will appear in Edinburgh, or should, as the stuff of the world goes across the Scottish screens. It will be simple for the sideliners to go ooh! aah! with Flaherty. It will be much more difficult to note that single swallows don't make a summer and that, whatever the present weather may be like, ours collectively is certainly a summer.

Therefore the meeting of the documentary people themselves, with the thrashing out of their problems, their needs and their shortcomings, is going to be one of the more important occasions at Edinburgh and in the history of the documentary development. Wright on national documentary, Elton on international documentary, Pearson on colonial documentary, Alexander on second feature documentary, Rotha on documentary's influence on feature production, Manvell on the aesthetic of documentary, have together the opportunity of bringing the whole thing into new focus and fit for the size of the privilege which national needs and international implications have brought it.

They have a task of leadership to attempt more momentous than at any time before. They have the great new problems of peacetime to face up to and definition to make of what documentary has to give in illumination of the technological, scientific, colonial, international and, in general, economic changes which are upon us.

For presenting the documentary effort everywhere, for reminding us that documentary is not only an established medium of public service but a medium continually revealing new forces and requiring new efforts, all of us in its profession must be grateful for the screen and the platform which Edinburgh now so handsomely provides us. One suspects that it comes easily to the capital of a country which for six centuries has given so much encouragement to so many adventurers that it quite reasonably suffers the illusion of being the capital of the world.

1948 Congress of World Union of Documentary

Reported on by Donald Alexander and Basil Wright

THERE was no iron curtain; only cloud covering all Europe, and blotting out every frontier we crossed.

At Prague Air Terminal (so fast had been the crossing, so reasonable and smooth the formalities at the airport) there was not the expected English-speaking Miss Velibelova of Kratky Films to meet us. The chairman of British Documentary had provided us with a sketch map, a warning that the lifts in Prague only worked if you had one of a number of possible coins of varying sizes, and a heartfelt report on the steepness of the seven-floor ascent to Kratky Films. We decided to face all the risks, and set out.

In any event, what with one thing and another, we spent the whole of that afternoon and evening in Prague on our own, exploring. We must record a few simple facts. We were *not* shadowed. There were many bookshops (more in a small space than in any city we know except Edinburgh) well-stocked with books of all kinds in many languages. There were several bookstalls selling English newspapers, and the reading-room in the hotel had them *all*. Beer was fivepence-halfpenny a pint (that's how we got the right coin to work the Kratky film lift).

But most of all we saw that people looked cheerful, much more cheerful than crowds in Oxford Street. We knew that our superficial inspection of Prague could not be of much academic value—but we knew, too, that when people look like that, they are certainly not living under a reign of terror.

At 8.30 in the morning we were taken by Miss Velibelova to the President Wilson Railway Station by a circuitous route, picking up essential documents and curious boxes as we moved from office to office. Outside the Wilson station, where we learned that we had to walk a hundred yards for our (reduced-fare) tickets, we encountered with joy our old friend Perski, who is in charge of Polish newsreels and whose sketches of the delegates to the Congress adorn these pages. We then made our way to the platform where we found a not-so-smart-as-in-the-movies Orient Express, with no seats outside first-class. Establishing ourselves in a second-class corridor, we awaited events and we didn't have to wait long. Down the platform came Joris Ivens, accompanied by the Australian, Katherine Duncan, who we learned was working as his assistant. Hot on their heels came the American Marian Mitchell, also working with Ivens, and at that precise moment, seeking vainly for his luggage, together with the typewriter of the correspondent of *l'Humanité*, a red-haired lady who claimed that this was the only time—including the battle of Teruel—in which she had let it out of her clutches. Two seconds later arrived, amidst acclamation, another member of the Polish delegation, Bossak, with an important briefcase, which we learned only later, during breakfast at Marianske Lazne, contained butter, Nescafe, marmalade, goat cheese, bacon, and the remaining comestibles without which no self-respecting Pole would, it appears, venture beyond his own border. Pausing officially only at Pilsen, where beer was served from trolleys, the Orient Express deposited the delegates at Marianske Lazne.

Inaugural Meeting

Within less than an hour of our arrival the inaugural meeting of the Congress took place in a room at the appropriately named Hotel Yalta. The provisional secretary, Jean Painleve, was there from France, together with Henri Langlois. Georges Toeplitz, the leading Polish delegate, had come on from Prague the night before with Elmar Klos, the director of Kratky Film, which co-ordinates all short film production in Czechoslovakia. There were two delegates from Hungary, Mr Kertesz and Miss Zsigmondy, Theodor Balk from Yugoslavia, who was at the 1947 Brussels meeting, Bech from Switzerland, Vernaillen from Belgium (standing in for Henri Storck who could not come), and two other Czech representatives, Kadar and Sulc. Slightly later arrived two Brazilians, Amado and Scliar. We all sat down and the official reception began. We were addressed by the Czechoslovak Minister of Information, the Director of his Films Division, and by Dr Brousil, already well known and well liked by all those concerned with earlier Film Festivals in Prague and London. From these speeches, which were all of them both practical and inspiring, one very important phrase emerged, 'Documentary is the conscience of the cinema'.

With this in mind the delegates gave their own consciences no chance and prepared to set to work. First, however, there was one very important function. As our host, Elmar Klos, offered us ceremonial bread and salt. One delegate refused on the grounds that he was not hungry. Later the interpreting system became smoother, and such dictionary deadlocks were rare. The defaulting delegate made good his mistake at the tail end of the round.

Congress, within an hour of meeting, then got down to business. Delegates presented their credentials, and it was at once clear that Great Britain was so far the only country which had formed an organization specially to represent it in the World Union. This fact, together with a brief report on the work of British Documentary, given by the British delegation, later that same afternoon, created a very strong impression amongst the other delegates. A president for the Congress and three vice-presidents then had to be elected. The British delegation proposed Elmar Klos as president; and Toeplitz, Ivens and Wright were elected vice-presidents. The acceptance of the delegates' credentials was, as became clear a few minutes later, deeply allied with the approval of the Brussels Declaration of 1947, and, therefore, with the terms of reference of the Draft Constitution, drawn up at Cannes, to the discussion of which the Congress proceeded without any further delay.

The Brussels declaration and the definition of documentary at the beginning of the statutes were both accepted practically without discussion. Following this remarkable unanimity on first principles, the Congress was faced with the slightly muddling problem of sorting out its agenda. It was agreed that the size of the Congress did not make it necessary to appoint a vast number of commissions, and, for the time being, only one commission was appointed, whose job it was to present a practical report on the Draft Constitution before the next meeting of the Congress at 10 a.m. the following morning. It was also proposed, and courageously agreed by the British Delegation, that the language of the Conference should be French. The British delegation accepted this situation with remarkable goodwill in view of the fact that they then became obligated to translate the transactions currently from French into English for the benefit of the Hungarian delegation; this *tour de force* would never have been achieved had it not been for the assistance of Miss Velibelova of the Czechoslovak delegation, who, like her colleague, was apparently able to speak and interpret every known European language. What was more remarkable was that the French of the British delegation did not, repeat not, have to be translated for the benefit of the members of the French delegation.

Second Day

The bulk of the second day was devoted to reports by the delegates of various countries regarding the position and activities of the documentary movement. In this way detailed

Klos

information was laid on the table by all the delegates present. Finally, the Constitution of the World Union was fully discussed and accepted in principle. A committee to put it into more legal language was set up, consisting of Toeplitz (Poland), Vernaillen (Belgium), and Langlois (France).

Monday was a heavy day. The British delegation had been sampling the night life of Marianske (a town which consists almost exclusively of restaurants and night clubs) and Wright was moved unwillingly into the chair. National Sections were discussed and the importance of the provision in the Constitution that representatives in the World Union should be by properly organized National Sections, was stressed. A discussion on the right of the film-maker not to have his films tampered with was interrupted by the arrival of a delegation of Russians, including Romm, Piriev and the actor, Cherkasov. Romm promised to give a report on behalf of the Soviet Union the following day. A committee to draw up the constitution of the National and International Courts of Honour was elected, consisting of Ivens (Holland), Bossak (Poland) and Alexander (Britain). The Polish delegation suggested that the work of the Congress could be speeded up if there were also committees on Production and Distribution, to prepare matter for discussion in full meeting. Two committees were elected: Production, Kertesz (Hungary), Bech (Switzerland) and Scliar (Brazil); Production, Klos (Czechoslovakia), Painleve (France) and Toeplitz (Poland). The full meeting dissolved at midday, much to the relief of the chairman, and the committees worked in the afternoon, interrupted only by a newsreel session, during which the delegates were filmed entering the Casino, which, lest there be any misunderstanding, was the principal theatre of the Film Festival proper.

On the fourth day Congress with very little difficulty decided on the basic categories of Documentary, as follows:

Documentary films fall into one of four categories, according to their purpose:

1. Social.
2. Scientific.
3. Cultural and Educational.
4. Experimental.

According to their audience they fall into three categories:

1. General Public.
2. Specialist.
3. Scholastic.

Romm of the Soviet Union then gave a long, detailed and interesting report on the structure of the documentary system in his country, and

THE BRUSSELS DECLARATION

(Adopted at a meeting of documentary film makers held in Brussels, June 1947.)

True to their tradition of service to the peoples of the world, in the fields of economic, social and educational progress, documentary film workers continue to take an active viewpoint towards the many problems confronting the world today.

The indispensable role of documentary in the fields of information and education and in the communication of ideas, makes it necessary for the documentary workers, not only to state the problems exactly, but also to guide the public towards the solution of these problems.

In this task, it is the responsibility of every documentary worker to master the technique and artistic potentialities of the documentary film, so that art and technique are fused with the social purpose of documentary.

The documentary film has established itself as a form of film art. It has a profound influence on feature films in all countries. This influence will certainly continue. In particular, documentary film workers should engage in all activities designed to secure the full and unfettered expression of social, economic and cultural life through the medium of film.

The principal tasks confronting documentary workers are as follows:

the fight against the enemies of peace and democracy; national, racial and economic oppression and religious intolerance; poverty and disease, illiteracy, ignorance and other social evils;

and the fight for peace and reconstruction; independence of subject peoples; free intellectual and cultural expression; dissemination of knowledge, not at present available to all.

Documentary film workers will collaborate with all international organizations working for the principles enumerated above.

Balk

Amado

By 'Documentary' is meant the business of recording on celluloid any aspects of reality, interpreted either by factual shooting or by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so as to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purposes of stimulating the desire for and the widening of human knowledge and understanding, and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the sphere of economics, culture and human relations.

Toeplitz

also expressed full support of the Brussels Declaration. After this Congress dealt with the reports of the committees on Production and Distribution. As regards Production, an important resolution was passed:

> 'Newsreels are not necessarily documentaries, but as actuality films fall into the category of informational films. The World Union has decided that it is the duty of documentary film workers to encourage newsreels to be better planned and more progressive; further, the World Union denounces the danger inherent in the extension to documentary films of the superficiality common to most newsreels.'

In addition, decisions were arrived at regarding joint production by documentary groups in various nations, with special references to the exchange of technicians and the exchange of material and information. The Distribution Committee made eleven important recommendations on non-theatrical distribution.

Late in the day, but with unabated energy, the Congress conducted a final discussion on the Constitution and followed this a prolonged, technical and vigorous discussion on the terms of reference of the Court of Honour. That same evening the French texts were agreed and the English texts were prepared.

On the fifth day Mrs Mustacza spoke for Rumania and George Stoney, very effectively, for the USA. The rest of the day was spent in elections and tidying up. All the officers were appointed:

Executive:

President, Basil Wright (Great Britain); vice-presidents, Joris Ivens (Holland), Elmar Klos (Czechoslovakia); secretary, Georges Toeplitz (or nominee) (Poland); treasurer, Ruis Santos (or nominee) (Brazil).

Court of Honour:

Presiding, Jean Painleve (France), Henri Storck (Belgium), Bela Balasz (Hungary).

It was unanimously agreed that the next Congress should be held at Edinburgh. Subscriptions were agreed upon, with due reference to the problems of international exchange. The French and English texts of the Constitution and the rules of the Court of Honour were signed by all the delegates, and after a Press conference, at which the new secretary distinguished himself by making the same speech in three different languages consecutively, Congress formally came to an end.

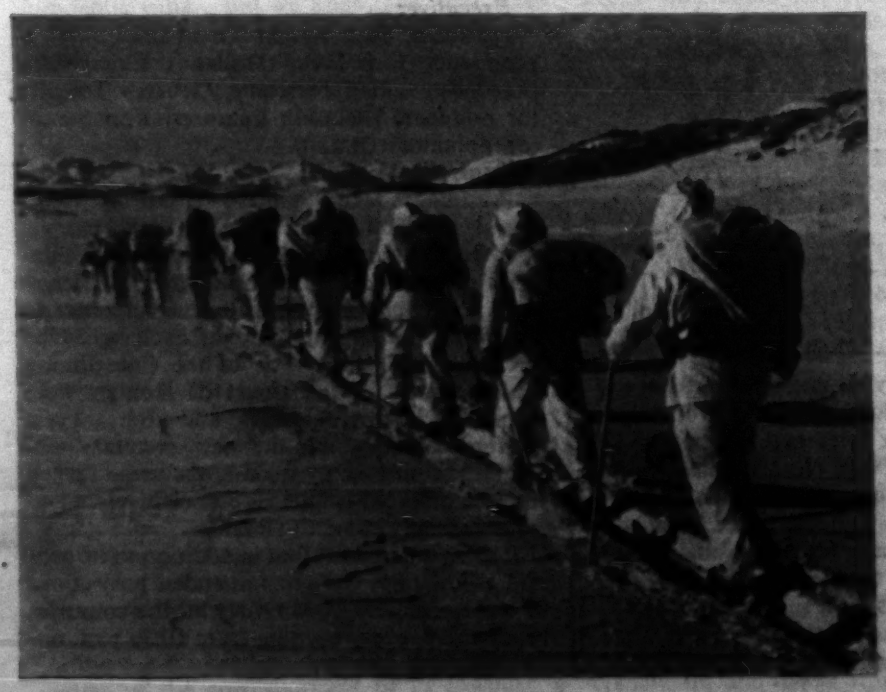
It should be added that in addition to its general labours the Congress attended projections of documentaries from nearly all the countries represented, every evening from 10.30 p.m. until all hours.

Edin ILLUS

Feeling of Hostility
(National Film Board of Canada)

Ditte Child of Man
(Denmark)

The Battle of the Heavy Water
(Norway)



burgh TRATED

Those Blasted Kids
(Denmark)

The Home Town Paper
(National Film Board of Canada)

Sleeping Villages
(Argentine)

Two Ballet Films ★

Pas de Deux

by

PETER BAYLIS and JACK HOWELLS

WHEN it comes to dancing we knew a thing or—as there are two of us—two. We knew that *pas de bourrée* wasn't a postal district; and we knew that *pas du tout* didn't mean 'Everybody on stage for the last number!' But apart from that, we had pretty open minds about dancing. In fact, they were so open that somebody must have noticed it. That was why we found ourselves watching two films on the subject. The first was called *Steps of the Dance* (Crown Film Unit).

It wouldn't have been right for some of you to be there. It was made, we fancy, for people like us. It set out to explain what a ballet was in easy steps. It was a good film, too (you don't find many reviewers committing themselves like that). It was conscientiously made, it was sincere and enjoyable. But it didn't tell us a lot more about ballet than we'd guessed.

Mr Robert Helpmann (who appears) told us that the terms used in ballet were French and he explained by visual illustration what they meant. He pointed out that arms, knees and posture of the head were important factors and we saw young men and women rehearsing. We learnt that dancing is hard work, that conceiving a ballet is hard work, that composer and choreographer, scenic artist, dancers and stage-hands all co-operated to produce the final thing that was a ballet. Oh, and that a ballet told a story.

The film was to end with a short, complete ballet and the story was told to us first in a brilliantly thought-out little sequence, the commentator outlining the plot while the camera moved over the waiting props and the dancers silently preparing. Somehow the result was delicately moving; the artists off-stage, the frank pieces of cardboard, and the bare bones of the story they were to breathe to life added up to something near poignancy.

Then came the climax—the performance of the ballet. It was presented flat and theatrically. That is to say, it all took place in long shot with a static camera; lighting was strictly unemotional. The reason was obvious and well-meant. The camera was recording; it was an instructional film and in an instructional film we know that where clarity conflicts with film technique the latter must be sacrificed. And the whole point was that we should see the finished thing as it would appear on the stage. But, of course, we didn't. We only saw a film of that and it was another kettle of fish.

Let us face it, for the makers of the film didn't. This set out to be an exposition of the steps of the dance. But very early on, it became impatient, understandably. Everybody was itching to get on with the dance. And why not? Having seen the mechanics, the dance was to show us how these could be made to affect us emotionally. That in itself was meant to be a piece of instruction. Therefore it would have been better to have used the recording medium unashamedly for that purpose, to create in us, in the cinema, what the dance would have created on the stage. As it was, we missed the whirling close-up, the filmic presentation. It would have been a lie? Of course it would. All art consists in telling little lies in order to convey a greater truth. That's where that little thing called integrity comes in—you have to have it when you're dealing daily in lies.

To sum up: the whole presentation was well thought-out; the camera work in the earlier sequences was excellent; the film was neat, well-contrived and never dull. But if you are one of those people who are not well-disposed to ballet, it is doubtful if the film would increase your enthusiasm. Perhaps that doesn't matter; perhaps it isn't aimed at you. Exactly whom it *is* aimed at is not very clear, after all.

If you *are* one of those who find classical dancing too stylized and formal, then the second film should do something for you. This one was called *Lord Siva Danced*, made in India with additional scenes shot in England. This was quite an experience. We don't pretend we got one quarter of it. Indian dancing like Indian music for Western folk is an acquired taste; it takes a little understanding. But here again was sincerity, enthusiasm, both on the part of film makers and dancers. The amazing thing about Indian dancing, it seems to us, is not only that it has something queer and exciting to say, but that it says it with such economy. Here are no groups of dancers flitting about the stage; it is all done in practically one place. And what we saw was strictly a *pas d'un* (or *d'une*—you see both in this film). We do not claim that every movement registered, but the subtlety, the restraint and control left us gaping. (Wake up, Howells!)

There was one dance that left us shaken men. The dancer was an elderly man; he was interpreting a bee entering a flower and flying away. But he did it all with his face and his hands and was photographed with effect lighting (all credit to the film makers). No flying lady as the Dying Bee, no prostrate maidens forming the cup of the petals, no young men draped round as the flowers of the forest. This artist had something intense to say, he said it with amazing economy and the camera helped him to say it. Ram Gopal appears, too, in a Dance to the Rising Sun; and one flicker of his shoulders was equal to four arabesques and a *pas de deux*.

There you are then—two films on dancing. *Steps of the Dance* technically polished in production and content. *Lord Siva Danced*, production not as good, yet in content, more than polished. It had virility, something welling up from deep roots, speaking for and to the ordinary people. It even reached us.

Andrée Howard and Arthur Benjamin discuss the Ballet with two of the Dancers

The Films ★

Steps of the Ballet. Made by Crown Film Unit. *Producer:* Alexander Shaw. *Director:* Muir Mathieson. *Choreography:* Andrée Howard, to the music of Arthur Benjamin and the decor and costumes of Hugh Stevenson. *Photography:* A. E. Jeakins. *Editor:* Jocelyn Jackson. *Art Director:* Scott MacGregor. Music played by the Philharmonic Orchestra of London. Recorded by Ken Cameron. Explained by Robert Helpmann.

Lord Siva Danced. Made by Shell Film Unit. *Director:* Sarah Erulker. *Photography:* Keki Mistri and Sidney Beadle.

Why Should Truth Go Dowdy?

We would remind readers that views expressed in any unsigned article are not necessarily those of the Board—Ed.

I SAW a documentary film the other night. Or it may have been a feature—or a feature-documentary. . . . But don't let's start that yet. Anyway, it was in a proper cinema with usherettes and a Gents so it was probably a feature. It was called *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare (working from a Report, of course). And it had quite a lot of social content for a feature, so it will be in order for any documentary person to go and see it. Film Centre's been so that should be quite all right. In fact, anybody can go—even the public. Don't let that disturb you. There is nothing in it to offend the intellect.

Indeed, there is one potential documentarian in the cast. His name is Polonius, I think. But the name doesn't matter. You'll be sure to spot him. Don't start cheering him, nobody else does; whatever you may think, you can take it from me, he is not the hero. When Hamlet asked him what the players were capable of, he sounded exactly like a Senior Documentarian (vintage '32) explaining to a suspicious sponsor what his boys could do: 'Tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral. Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light.'

It's the sub-divisions that, like Charlie Chester,* ring that bell. 'Documentary . . . Feature . . . documentary-feature . . . feature-documentary . . . a-feature-film-with-a-documentary-background . . . a-fictional-film-using-real-people-with-some-actors-dealing-with-a-properly-registered-and-approved-social-problem-achieving-a-creative-interpretation-of-reality-calculated-to-make-peace-exciting (with-some-dialogue).'

You want to watch that kind of thing. Some people can't follow you. If you persist, you'll find yourselves one of these days having to explain to a slightly sceptical teachers' conference the exact difference between a documentary-strip-tease and a feature-film-strip. What's more, I believe some of you could do it, too.

But it's no good, boys. The time has come to talk of many things and it would be as well to give them a name each. And you can sort yourselves out in the process. The cause of all the worried frowns is that word documentary. Throw away the old umbrella, it's got holes in it. And anyway, it's not raining half as hard as you think. It's just the noise on the roof.

Go and do a report on yourselves—and then, preferably, a treatment. Find out exactly what you are. I'll start you off. *You're a social problem.* . . . There! Happy? Well, take it up from there; with your training, it should be easy. And when you've finished your Report do you know what you'll find? I'll tell you: that you're good fellows, with the right roots; but you knew that. But you'll also find out (if your report is based on an honest investigation) whether you are a teacher or a pamphleteer—or maybe (just maybe) a creative artist. But whatever you are be proud of it. Teachers, lecturers, playwrights, are all good things to be. If you find, for example, that after all, you're really a technical journalist—well, all right. You've got a job to do—but don't kid yourself you're a dramatist; you may be a damned good teacher—but that doesn't make you an artist. Just decide.

Now teachers and dramatists (good ones) have much in common. They both have an active interest in people and a desire to help. In the great big world outside Soho Square such people get on quite well with one another. There's no confusion. So what's the trouble with you? It's simple. It's that little word film. You've been messing about with bits of it for so long that you've forgotten what it is (if you ever knew).

Film is rolls of celluloid manufactured usually by Kodak and on it you can put anything from pornography to prayer. There's nothing fundamentally new about the mental process involved. There's been a stuff called paper flapping round the universe for a long time now and it's been used for a multitude of purposes. In this respect, as a matter of fact, it's better than film.

So let's take a book and call it *The Virgin's Delight* with a nice, crude cover sealed in cellophane to stop you reading it without buying it (don't snigger—I'll bet you've been caught that way, too). Where will you find it? Where it belongs—on the kerb, next to the gutter. But Shakespeare, Johnson, Pope, Keats and all the rest of them are in the public library. They may not be read but they're there—respectable, bound in leather, designed to last. And they've been there a long time. They're the acknowledged tops. You can work downwards if you like, but at least you've got something to show you how far you're slipping. In the slow old days when monks made books by hand, only the good was worth the trouble. There was no money in it. Then came the rotary printing press and fortuitously a semi-literate public 'waiting' as Harmsworth put it 'with their pennies in their hands'. And the trouble started.

Now take films. The trouble with films is (*a*) they're so damned costly, (*b*) there's so much pompous fiddle-faddle before you can say what's on your mind (which makes it an ideal medium for those who haven't much to say anyway) and (*c*) they were invented so late in the day. For make no mistake, had they been invented when they should, you'd have found Brother Anselm in his cutting-room, patiently piecing together his record for the vaults of posterity, his habit reeking of acetate and the light from the editola gleaming chastely on his tonsure. As it is, there are no latter-day saints in Wardour Street. They're in Soho Square.

Now take it easy. That's the biggest compliment I'm likely to pay you. Until you came along, the pimps and panders had it all their own way; nicely tied up with jobs for the boys. They were outside society and soaking it hard. Occasionally, they made some good pictures, responsible pictures. If you get a monkey at a typewriter (no cracks, *please*) one day you'll get the Lord's Prayer . . . you know the principle. It isn't even that the boys object to culture; they'd go in for it tomorrow in a big way if they were convinced it paid. *You* believe in it whether it pays or not. And there's the rub (I told you I'd been to *Hamlet*). Yet you, with good on your side, have made some bad pictures, real top-of-the-class stinkers. But we'll forgive you. After all, you were the first that ever burst into that sea of hooey. So remember: whether they're features or er . . . 'documentaries' (well, you know what I mean), whether they come in ten reels or two, whether they're made in Wardour Street or Soho Square, whether they've got stories or whether they haven't—the only real difference between you and the boys is motive. (It used to be anyway, but I'm worried about some of you.) Get that motive clear and then decide in which field it's going to motivate you. But don't mix the breeds.

You were the first then, I say, to dare to state that film could be used for other things. And because you were reactionaries, you had to state it raw. You *had* to wear a halo in self-defence. You were the original monks of the film business. *Now for God's sake get out of that habit—and throw away the sandals while you're about it.* Get rid of the sack-cloth and ashes.

'Going to get my old tuxedo pressed,
Going to sew some buttons on my vest,
For tonight I'm going to look my best. . . .'

You know the old song? Here's another verse adapted for the occasion:

'Going to get the barber slick my hair,
Got to get myself to Leicester Square,
For tonight I've got my *première*. . . .'

It makes you think, doesn't it?

For look. Showmanship, slickness, spit-and-polish are not evil things. It's just that they've usually been the prerogative (in cinema particularly) of the people who have dubious things to say. Take it from them. Why should truth, sincerity and human dignity go dowdy? As long as you let it, that bust you see up there on the hoarding will be a slightly different contour from the one in the public library. You're bookish boys, but in the halls of literature the battle is won, indeed, was never really waged. *The Virgin's Delight* is in the gutter as I've told you. But its celluloid equivalent is up there in lights (and celluloid's *your* business). Don't write letters to each other about it. Get started—but you'll have to change your ways.

For, speaking of lights, remember Chester-

(*Continued at foot of page* 94)

*A well-known low-brow comedian of the day.

★ **STAR FEATURE**

The Red Shoes

THIS FILM had a quality of magic about it, which is common to most stories about the stage, perhaps because the theatre is concerned with the creation of another world, which can be either a faithful imitation of our own world, or a fantastic figment of an author's imagination, but which in any case is larger than life, more tragic, more humorous, more squalid or more beautiful. In this world it is possible to pick out the significant details and ignore the mass of insignificant ones which obscure them in everyday life, and the actors, while they walk the stage, are demi-gods, superhuman or sub-human, Prospero or Caliban, made of no common clay. There is a peculiar fascination in any story which shows you the backstage scene, the squabbles, rivalry, chaos, comradeship, hard work and creative genius which go to make up a finished production. This film has the further advantage of a subject, ballet, which is in itself beautiful to look at, and *The Red Shoes* is visually superb. Again and again in their ability to pick out the detail which sums up an emotion, such as a pair of red dancing slippers going at fantastic speed down a circular iron staircase, or the painted tragic face of Massine looking down at those same slippers after their owner has been killed, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger show their supreme ability to think in terms of the camera. The film also shows traces of a certain grandioseness which has a tendency to mar the otherwise finely imaginative work of these directors. The scene in the society drawing room, where Anton Walbrook finds his future *ballerina assoluta*, is singularly unconvincing, and one scene where Moira Shearer ascends what seems miles and miles of improbable steps in evening dress of a pretentiousness which seems out of place even in Monte Carlo, is cinematically bad and quite unnecessary to the action. The plot is likewise weak, being concerned with the conflict in a dancer's mind between the claims of her art and her desire for domestic bliss, which results in what seemed a somewhat unnecessary leap in front of a train. Anton Walbrook gives a beautiful performance, as the impressario who demands a single-minded devotion from his dancers, but the psychological climax of the film is unsatisfying and unconvincing, partly because the two minds behind the conflict, Lermontov's and the ballerina's, are insufficiently developed in the film and partly because Moira Shearer, who dances exquisitely but is no great actress, fails to compel in the audience that willing suspension of disbelief which alone could have redeemed the weak scripting of this part of the film.

This may sound somewhat damning, but in actual fact it matters very little. The private lives of the characters which compose the ostensible plot of the film are not really important. The film is really about ballet, those who dance in it, those who make the music for it, those who design the sets and costumes, the man who controls and co-ordinates these activities, about the ballet. Whether it shows us the finished performance, the chaos which precedes it, the mad rush of the galleryites at Covent Garden pouring upstairs, or the ungainly, agile, Frenchly expressive high kick of one Paris porter demonstrating to another what this thing ballet is, Ballet is the subject, the plot and the hero, and as long as this was the case, there was never a dull moment. This is not to say, either, that this film is primarily intended for balletomanes, although it might possibly prepare the ground for balletomania in hitherto uninfected minds. It tells you incidentally a great deal about ballet, but in such a way that you do not realize that you are being instructed. Here there are several interesting comparisons to be drawn between this film intended for entertainment, and a recent Central Office of Information film, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, called *Steps of the Ballet*, which is meant to inform. Much of the basic material of ballet was explained, and finally a complete ballet was shown. It was photographed flat, that is to say, the camera took up the position of the audience and stayed there throughout. This is no way to bring ballet to the screen, for it is by its nature a live and fluid thing, just as film should be live and fluid. It is a great mistake to think, however, that because the subject is live it will keep that life automatically when it is transferred to celluloid. In *The Red Shoes* there is what must be the best part of twenty minutes of pure ballet, without a word of dialogue and without leaving the stage, and the interest never flagged. There was hardly any flat photography; some of the time you saw the actual ballet being danced, and here the camera was everywhere on the stage, forestalling the dancers' movements, leaping into the red shoes as Moira Shearer put them on, and closing up to them again as they are drawn off her feet at the end. Much of the time the camera was interpreting the dance in terms of the conflict in the dancer's mind between her love and her dancing, and sometimes it juxtaposed an image to heighten the movement of the dancers and the music, as when the sea surged in the auditorium as Moira Shearer spun across the stage in a wide spacious arc, and the music swelled to meet her. The dancing was magnificent, Moira Shearer, Robert Helpmann, who was responsible for the choreography of the *Red Shoes* ballet, and above all Leonide Massine, all playing their parts superbly. Massine, apart from his part in the dancing, stole the picture as far as I was concerned. Every time he appeared on the screen, everyone else appeared half alive beside his intense vitality. Every movement of his fingers or his feet talked more expressively than a couple of pages of dialogue, and he was largely responsible for the feeling of authenticity in this picture of the life behind the scenes. The picture may be heightened, as any dramatic representation, whether play or film, must be, but it is a vivid and convincing one.

The subject of *The Red Shoes* is ballet, and to put over this subject it has a plot. As in the case of many documentary films, where they allow their audiences the sop of a fictional plot, this is weak. Nevertheless, although there are many minor flaws in the film, it makes its audience not only swallow a great deal of ballet but thoroughly enjoy doing it, and it succeeds in doing this because it approaches its subject through living things, through the people whose lives are involved. The tendency for documentary films is to approach their subjects through dead things, through figures and statistics and factory chimneys. The very names applied to this type of filmmaking are indicative; documentary, factual. Documents and facts are dry things unless they are brought to life by showing the human beings whose lives are bound up in them. Two things are needed in documentary films, more humanity and more visual excitement. It is a very much easier thing to make a film about ballet and the people who dance it human and visually exciting, than to bring the same qualities into a film about factory workers, but it has been successfully done in documentary. *Steps of the Ballet* is a film intended for novices, made in the hope of interesting people in ballet by explaining the basic technique; well and good. I would not mind betting, however, that more people will come away from *The Red Shoes* with the idea that perhaps it would be worth finding out more about ballet than will be enthused by the more informative *Steps of the Ballet*.

WHY SHOULD TRUTH GO DOWDY?

(*Continued from page* 93)

ton's illiterate peasant looking at the sky signs on Broadway? He would surely, said Chesterton, believe that those wonderful lights, speaking 'through the agency of the two most vivid and most mystical of the gifts of God, colour and fire' were conveying some such glorious message as 'Give me liberty or Give me Death'; he would be distressed to find that all that golden fire merely stood for 'Mr Bilge's Paradise Toothpaste'. But because I know that Bilge is only Bilge, shall I stoop to the profanity of saying that fire is only fire?' For 'fire' read 'showmanship', 'sparkle', and the profanity's yours. So get off your knees.

'The truth drones on,' said someone recently, 'with the muffled voice of one truly speaking from a well.' If you have some truth to tell—climb out. Tell it neat like a teacher, if you will; but if you want to write it *large* then do it in the theatres. Don't think it's easy because in the hurly-burly of show business you have to be damned sure of yourself and your message. You've got to be dead certain inside if you decide to muck about. Which are you? If you're the pamphleteer and the teacher then go ahead where you belong and good luck to you; the world has need of thee. But don't clutter up the stage. You don't belong there. Stand back and let the showmen among you come forward.

Oh, and if you do decide at last that you're a showman after all, don't ponder too long as to whether you're about to sell your soul. It may well be a highly academic self-question. You see, you have to find a buyer.

'The time is out of joint; O cursèd spite
That ever I was born to set it right . . . .'

Away with cussèd spite, you Highlander Hamlets, you—and set it right with a wisecrack!

The Film Society Movement in South Africa

by

Lily Rabkin

(Reprinted from 'The Outspan', February 6, 1948)

THE first South African Film Society was started in Cape Town some years ago, but it had to give up owing to numerous difficulties. The present flourishing movements—there are film societies in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Durban and Maritzburg, and at the University of the Witwatersrand—also began in Cape Town. In June, 1945, about ten people, all interested in the film, met at a private house, and decided to form some organization for the showing of films, old and new, which were worthy of attention and which could not be seen on the commercial circuit.

The initial aims were very modest. We did not expect that the group would attract more than 40 people and we decided to start our meetings with documentary films easily obtainable locally. Each of the original sponsors contributed something towards initial expenses and a circular explaining the idea was sent out to people who might be interested in the project. We hired a board-room in Adderley Street, which holds about 90 people, and held our first meeting on August 29, 1945. To our pleased surprise—and embarrassment, for some had to be turned away—about 150 people turned up and the idea was *triumphantly* justified.

The first programme consisted of a British Council colour film, *Teeth of Steel;* a 1917 Charlie Chaplin short; that classic British documentary, *Night Mail* (directors, Harry Watt and Basil Wright); and the first of Frank Capra's powerful war documentaries, *Why We Fight*.

Thus the Cape Town Film Society was born. Its objects, as laid down in the constitution, are (1) to further interest in the film as a social, artistic and historical medium, (2) to further film appreciation. The CTFS is, of course, a non-commercial and non-profit-making body, and it is worthy of note that it has no colour bar. The society meets monthly and meetings are open only to members, who pay their subscriptions for a minimum period of three months. The subscription is only 2*s.* 6*d.* a month, which places the society within the reach of most people.

One of the first problems of a film society in South Africa is a suitable hall. We met for a long time at the Metropolitan Hall, which seats about 300 people. When the hall was reserved by the Methodist Church for its own activities, we moved to the smaller Oddfellows Hall. We have, therefore, had to keep our membership more or less stationary at about 200 people.

The membership is composed about equally of men and women and consists of representatives of all professions and occupations. Most of the members are between 25 and 45 years. We have regular monthly meetings, have shown a wide variety of films, old and new, and have, we hope, brought home the importance of the film both as a sociological and artistic instrument. Geoffrey Smith, our chairman, was present at Brussels in June last year when, during the Film Festival there, the World Union of Documentary was formed, pledging its support to the fight for peace and reconstruction, for the independence of subject peoples, for free intellectual and cultural expression and the free dissemination of knowledge.

Either directly or indirectly inspired by the Cape Town example, six other film societies have been started. Once they were in operation, Cape Town has been able to help and advise in many ways, particularly by lending its films.

The first of these was Stellenbosch. The membership of the Stellenbosch Film Society now stands at about 80, of whom about 60 are drawn from the University staff and their families, graduates and students. Of the remainder, nine are schoolteachers. Stellenbosch, an extremely enthusiastic and enterprising group, holds meetings once a month for eight months of the year.

Port Elizabeth, in turn, held its first, very crowded, film society meeting in the Technical College Hall on January 24, 1946. The sponsor was a local industrialist, Neil Abrahams. The membership of the Port Elizabeth Film Society is about 130, mostly professional and business people over thirty.

The Johannesburg Film Society began operations in October, 1946. The chairman, Fanny Klenerman, a Johannesburg bookseller, hired the Escom Theatre and invited those interested to see *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, the famous German experimental film (imported into South Africa by the Cape Town Film Society). Then a meeting was called and the Johannesburg Film Society was formed. It is naturally the biggest group, with about 450 members. Meetings are held in the Escom Theatre, with two 'sittings' for each programme.

Durban started its Film Society in February, 1947. Dr Herbert Coblans, the chairman, had been on the first committee of the Cape Town Film Society, and gathered together a preliminary committee. At the first meeting, *Film and Reality*, an absorbingly exciting history of the film, with excerpts from film landmarks of many kinds, was shown. As in the other centres, the hall was too small for the enthusiasts. Now, with the use of the larger YMCA hall, the membership is between 350 and 400.

In Maritzburg the meetings are held in the hall of the Technical College, which allows the use of the hall and projector at greatly reduced terms, because the Principal, very rightly, feels that such a body is a valuable form of adult education. Of the membership of about 140 a third are students (who pay a reduced subscription) and 20 are members of the University staff.

The youngest group is the Witwatersrand Film Society, which has already held a couple of meetings.

First in the list of film society problems in South Africa is the quest for films. Cape Town started off with documentaries, which are easily available in South Africa. Of these the most spectacular, perhaps, was *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922), a copy of which was found in a commercial film library in Johannesburg. This film was shown by the film societies long before the re-issue was shown on a South African commercial circuit. When it came on to the commercial screen, members of the Cape Town Film Society, to my knowledge, and probably elsewhere, went to see it again, urged their friends 'not to miss it', and sent their children to the matinées. It is thus plain that the film society movement is a useful supplement to the commercial cinema.

Other films are not so easy to come by. Luckily the British Film Institute has a National Film Library, which lets film societies have on permanent loan prints of films over which it has certain copyright rights. In this way the Cape Town Film Society has been able to import, at very reasonable cost, a number of films which are very important cinematic landmarks, and to share them with the other film societies. These include, among others, the Russian *Mother* (Pudovkin, 1926), the German *Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919), the French *Italian Straw Hat* (Rene Clair's joyous satire on the French bourgeoisie, made in 1927), the Russian *The General Line* (Eisenstein and Alexandrov, 1929), and the documentary history of the film, *Film and Reality* (Cavalcanti, 1942).

It is very interesting to note to which films members respond most heartily—sometimes the response is very unexpected. Cape Town members have enjoyed most, I think, *Nanook of the North*, *The Italian Straw Hat*, and the two parts of *Film and Reality*. Stellenbosch's high-light was also *Nanook*. Port Elizabeth liked *Diary for Timothy* best, and Durban went for *The Ox-bow Incident*, *The Italian Straw Hat* and *Sabotage* (Cape Town wasn't over-excited about *Sabotage*, but we had a poor print). Maritzburg enjoyed *Film and Reality*, *The Italian Straw Hat* and *Nanook*.

A further aim of the film societies is to co-operate if possible with other cultural and educational organizations. Cape Town has had a few highly successful experiments in this direction. In March, 1946, we had a meeting, in co-operation with the Association of Scientific Workers, on 'The Film and Public Health'. Relevant films were shown and Dr F. R. Luke

(Continued on page 96, column 3)

STAR FEATURES

CORRESPONDENCE

Commentaries

SIR: Emboldened by the sensible remarks of John Maddison in your recent issue, I venture to write as one who has made scores of commentaries and does not greatly care if, under prevailing conditions, he never makes another.

When I say 'made', I mean, read out, from sheets of paper which he has not seen before, at a swiftly moving series of screen pictures which he may have seen run through once.

And when I say 'read out', I mean, often bellowed into a microphone hung above head level a couple of yards off.

What sort of result can be expected but a cross between Fitz-who's-it's infantile travelogues and the American cadences of the imitators of E. V. H. Emmett?

As for the matter typed on the sheets . . . cameras work inside the heads of cinema audiences, behind their eyes. Can't sound tracks work there too, behind their ears, as responsible broadcasters make the microphone work? If your documentary directors want the impersonal, take-it-or-leave-it declamation of the BBC news bulletins, then let us all go on as we're doing; but don't expect audiences to be *interested*.

Interest comes by attraction; and a mere stream of declaimed sound reduces an audience, like people watching continually moving water, to idiocy not interest. That many commentaries resemble mill-races is due to the fact that they are written by people who don't use their voices.

Maybe the less commentary, the better. But let the commentator at least *speak* to his audience, with all the skill and craft he has. He will make the best job of it, if he is in the making of the film as early as possible, and at least at the cutting-room stage; and is personally responsible for what he says.

Yours faithfully,

JOSEPH MACLEOD

UNRRA

SIR: In connection with Grant McLean's interesting article on filming for UNRRA in China and his proposal that the UN might well sponsor such units throughout the world, I should like to call your attention to five other units sponsored by UNRRA: Captain David Miller, US Signal Corps, who travelled all through Europe to produce *Seeds of Destiny* (1946 US Academy Documentary Award winner); Nicholas B. Read, National Film Board of Canada, who went to Greece to produce *Out of the Ruins*; Arthur Calder-Marshall, who went to Egypt to produce *The Star and the Sand*, the film about the UNRRA Yugoslav refugee camp; Peter Hopkinson, who went to Byelorussia and the Ukraine to shoot the film later released by the March of Time as *The Russians Nobody Knows*, and Victor Vicas, who went to Italy to produce *Italy Rebuilds* for the International Film Foundation.

The United Nations itself now has films in production in nine different countries: United States, Mexico, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Poland, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. If 58 economy-minded United Nations are willing to grant the funds, we hope to continue and develop this new and important field of international documentary film production for international understanding.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM H. WELLS
Chief, Film and Television Section
Division of Films and Visual Information

Cumberland Story

SIR: I wished to show the uncut version of *Cumberland Story* which as you know ran for about 45 minutes. I now learn it has been cut to 10 minutes. Now if this is true then it is time there was an outcry. What does Humphrey Jennings, its director, think of this emasculation? I have heard the miners objected to the accident sequence (which I believe is cut) but there are other cuts. This film, in my opinion, was a first-class job—even Winnington of the *News Chronicle* described it as the 'Documentary of the Year'. If the reason for this ruthless cutting is considered necessary because of its propaganda effect, surely a Film Society does not come within the category of squeamish audiences. The accident sequences are not cut in *Kameradschaft* or *The Stars Look Down*. Film Societies approach films with a different attitude of mind and I should be interested to know the views of directors whose films have been carved up, and also Film Societies.

Yours faithfully,

H. E. NORRIS
Hon Secretary

FILM SOCIETIES (*continued from p. 95*)

gave an address. At another meeting, to which architectural students were invited, films on architecture and town-planning were shown, and Mr O. Pryce-Lewis, of the University of Cape Town, spoke on the subject. In May of last year, in conjunction with the Institute of Citizenship, we had a programme on 'Juvenile Delinquency', with the outstanding British documentary, *Children on Trial* (Jack Lee), and an address by Mr W. D. Marais, Principal of the Tokai reformatories.

Stellenbosch invites committees of University societies or groups, such as Native Administration, Sociology and Psychology, to films in which they would be interested, and sponsored with the Geography Department of the University the showing of films of a whaling expedition to the Antarctic. Stellenbosch maintains a happy relationship with the local cinema.

Durban has co-operated with the local Medical Association by inviting its members to see a film on 'Neuro-Psychiatry'.

It must not be thought, however, that the film societies meet in a mood of gloomy uplift. Members learn much, it is true, about the film and other matters—and they enjoy themselves greatly in the process. In Cape Town, 'Film Society Friday' is an institution among its members, which they do not care to miss.

The road is not an easy one. Halls and suitable projectors are not always easy to obtain. South Africa is very far from the centre of things and importing films is impossible, because of copyright restrictions and the very heavy customs duty, except when films with an educational certificate can be imported through the facilities so helpfully offered by the British Film Institute, which can, however, only provide those over which it has certain rights. But the South African Film Societies hope to continue what is a useful service in the cause of education and enjoyment. It is a movement which should have the active support of all educational and cultural bodies, and of the cinema industry, which cannot but benefit from an eager, well-informed audience.

CAMERA HIRE SERVICE
PHONE : GER. 1365-6-7-8
NEWMAN SINCLAIR MODELS 'A' & 'E' WITH
FULL RANGE OF EQUIPMENT AND TRIPODS
ALSO NEWMAN HIGH-SPEED *CAMERA*
All Inquiries:
S.F.L. LTD., 71 DEAN STREET, LONDON, W.1

℞

TAKE THOU

The Story of Pharmaceutical Manufacture

16mm. and 35mm. SOUND

Sponsored by

EVANS MEDICAL SUPPLIES LTD

Distributed by

CENTRAL FILM LIBRARY

Descriptive brochure from

Publicity Manager
EVANS MEDICAL SUPPLIES LTD
Speke, Liverpool 19

214-74/H8

BLACKHEATH FILM UNIT

Limited

9 North Street, Leatherhead

SURREY

offers a comprehensive

FILM and FILM-STRIP PRODUCTION SERVICE

for

EDUCATION

and

INDUSTRY

Member of the
Association of Specialized Film Producers

DOBSON

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE AND CINEMA

A series edited by Herbert Marshall

From Caligari to Hitler

SIEGFRIED KRACAUER

An analytical study of the German film as a reflection of the nation's psychological make-up.
'. . . a remarkable contribution to the serious literature of the cinema.'—*New Theatre*
'. . . important both as a scholarly history of the German film and as the most ambitious attempt so far made to analyse the social significance of a particular school of film-making.'—*Bulletin of the British Film Academy*

Available 64 *plates* 25*s net*

New Theatres for Old

MORDECAI GORELIK

An important history of production styles in the theatre, set against a background of momentous social and political change.
'. . . ably written, capably documented, amply illustrated, and capitally indexed . . .'—*Scotsman*

A detailed sociological study by J. P. Mayer, 'British Cinemas and their Audiences' will be published at about 15*s* later in the year

Available *Illustrated* 25*s net*

Current booklist on request from
12 Park Place, St James's, London SW1
Dennis Dobson Limited

MAKE FRUITFUL THE LAND · PROUD CITY · A FARMER'S BOY · CROFTERS

WE OF THE WEST RIDING · ENGLISH CRIMINAL JUSTICE · NORTH-EAST CORNER · TURN IT OUT

CYPRUS IS AN ISLAND · IT BEGAN ON THE CLYDE · AFTER SIX O'CLOCK · FIVE TOWNS · FENLANDS

No Bushels for Greenpark

Greenpark make films to be seen . . . Seen by the twenty millions who go weekly to their local cinemas.

Since the war's end sixteen of our films have been distributed in the public cinemas—an average of

ONE EVERY TWO MONTHS

If you have something to say on the screen and do not believe in hiding your light under a bushel, you should consult Greenpark.

GREENPARK PRODUCTIONS LTD

In Association with THE FILM PRODUCERS GUILD LTD

GUILD HOUSE · UPPER ST. MARTIN'S LANE · LONDON · WC2 *Temple Bar 5420*

TALE IN A TEACUP · A STRING OF BEADS · THEY GAVE HIM THE WORKS

THE SHENVAL PRESS, LONDON AND HERTFORD